Sonnet cycles – the linked sonnets usually followed a progressive rise and fall of a love relationship (though sometimes it was simply about unrequited love).

The cycle usually addresses the following things:

* cries to the moon and the world of sleep
* praises of his beloved’s beauty
* mourning for her absence
* bemoaning her iciness or rebuffs
* detailing the lover’s frustrated longings

**Notes on Sir Phillip Sidney’s Sonnet Cycle**

**Astrophil and Stella (108 sonnets and 11 songs)**

* Most believe that the Stella of the poems is Penelope Devereux, later Lady Rich, and that Astrophel (Astrophil) is Sidney himself.
* Literary critics disagree on whether Sidney's love for Penelope is real or merely literary, like Petrarch and Laura.
* The impossibility of a successful relationship between the two is a key theme of the sequence.
* The rift between the two is also expressed in the title of the piece.
* First of all, the title is made up of one name of Greek origin and one name of Latin origin: a clear disjunction. The presence of the grammatical coupling suggests that the two are a couple (such as [Romeo and Juliet](http://www.gradesaver.com/romeo-and-juliet/)), which readers immediately realize is not the case.
* Even the names themselves, meaning "star-lover" and "star," describes a separation between the two: there will always be distance between the stars and those who love them.

**Interesting side note:**

* Sidney's sonnet sequence shows references to the Homeric epic, particularly Homer's Penelope.
* Some scholars have suggested that the 108 sonnets in the sequence represent the 108 suitors of Penelope, who play a game of striving to hit the Penelope stone in order to determine who can court her.
* The 119 poems are also just one number short of the number of months Odysseus spent trying to return home to Penelope.
* The structure of the sonnet sequence, falling one month short of achieving Odysseus’ journey home, can be seen as an emphasis on Sidney's failure in his pursuit of his own Penelope.